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❧ FRANCIS MACARY ❧
THE CABINET-MAKER OF LAVAUUR.

HENRY LASSERRE.

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THE CABINET-MAKER OF LAVAU

BY

HENRI LASSERRE

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FRANCIS MACARY,
THE CABINET-MAKER OF LAVAUUR.

I.

FRANCIS MACARY, the cabinet-maker's apprentice, was a good-humored fellow. He had a lively and jovial disposition, and none more than he was ever ready for fun and merriment. Sprightly and active, he had travelled through France; he had been at Nantes, Cambray, Nîmes, Marseilles, and Lyons. He was a skilful workman, and it was not long before he passed his apprenticeship and became a master in his trade.

A good workman and a gay companion, he loved labor and did not despise pleasure. No prejudices restrained him. His course of philosophy had been completed with the reading of a few romances and infidel papers, and not a vestige of superstition remained to trouble him. He had thrown to the winds all the faith he ever possessed; and thus disencumbered himself of any baggage,

that he might journey through life with a more active gait.

While he travelled around in order to perfect himself in his trade, his free-thinking became more and more liberal. He never entered a church. He never sang a hymn; there were other songs that had his preference. When some of the good women with whom he used to board would speak to him of prayer, he would say to these "*Pater-noster* reciters": "Prayer! to work is to pray." In saying these words, he never thought that the reverse was true: *To pray is to work.*

In matters of religion, as in everything else, his impetuous character could bear with neither tepidity nor moderation; and so in a short time Macary had broken down the weak barrier which separates indifference from open infidelity.

It must be acknowledged, however, that otherwise he was good enough,—hot-headed but warm-hearted. Frank and prepossessing, always ready to oblige any of his comrades, true as gold, endowed with that natural wit and poetic fire so characteristic

of southerners, Francis Macary was everywhere welcome. He knew how to sympathize with the sufferings of others; he was quick to help the weak with his strong arms, and with his meagre purse to assist the poor.

He was as inflammable as gunpowder, and flew into a passion at the slightest provocation. The least contradiction—a broken plane, an unsteady bench, a knotty board,—would call forth a cry of impatience, which was invariably an oath or a blasphemy. Never did the parrot *Vert-Vert*—like Macary, perverted by travel—give utterance to more horrible imprecations than those which from morning till night, intermingled with the grinding of saws and the blows of the hammer, resounded in the workshop of Francis Macary.

II.

In 1833, after eight years passed in travelling from city to city, the journeyman cabinet-maker returned to Lavaur,* his

* Lavaur is a sub-prefecture in the department of

native city. He had just enough of Christianity left to desire to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony according to the rites of the Church.

Before going farther, we may say that, although he rejected for himself, and for men in general, all thought of devotion, he maintained, and with great warmth, that women should be pious. And when others sought to argue with him on this subject and to expose this contradiction of principles, he brought forward the most unexpected arguments.

“When I went to school,” he would reply, laughingly, “I learned in my grammar that religion—*la religion*—was of the feminine, not the masculine gender.”

“But if you find that religion is good and suitable for women, why is it not suitable for men, and why do not you yourself practise it?”

“You might just as well say that because

Tarn. Before the Revolution, this little town of seven or eight thousand was an episcopal see, and had the honor to count amongst its Bishops the illustrious Fléchier, who later was promoted to the see of Nîmes,

I find that a dress is very becoming to women, I should therefore put on petticoats myself!"

The real truth, hidden under these subtle pleasantries and these paradoxical replies, was that Macary, who was a great observer of human nature, had, in his travels, remarked that good Christian women made the best wives, and that this was quite the reverse with maidens without religion.

Shortly after his return to Lavaur, he led to the altar a young and pious workwoman, who seemed expressly adapted to make him happy. She had grace and devotedness, and other charming qualities. A fervent Catholic, and tenderly loving her husband, she wished to lead Francis back to the bosom of the Church. She had prepared a short apostolic discourse, which, one evening as they were walking together under the trees, beneath the soft rays of the moon, she began to deliver to him. But the workman soon cut short this homily.

"My dear little Virginie," he said, "I love you very much, and you preach very well,—almost as well as the curé. But if I do

not attend the sermons in the church, it is because I do not like them. It is, therefore, useless to bring them home to me. I have my ideas fixed—fixed like my heart, dear, which is wholly yours. In place of preaching to me, be satisfied with loving me, and in being loved in return. Do not commit the fault of striving to force your beliefs on your husband, of teasing him at every moment to go to Mass, or confession, or his Easter duty. Do not compromise our peace by seeking to direct and govern him whom you should obey. We should only have continual disputes, and all would end in making me set against religion even in women.”

Tears came into the eyes of poor Virginie.

“Come,” said Francis, embracing her, “let us talk no more on the subject, or rather do not speak of it again. If you find that I have but little religion, I willingly grant that you have much. Your good God will lose nothing on His part, nor I on mine. Let us both do our own duties in the management of the household, my dear little wife. I shall work for you, and you will pray for me. My labor and the sweat of

my brow will be given for you, and your prayers will be said for me."

Virginie was intelligent. She understood—what many women seem to be ignorant of—that the conversion of her husband was not to be effected by continually pressing and insisting with many words,—means which are rarely effectual, and oftentimes hazardous; but by the safer and more patient way, although more difficult to follow, of Christian virtues daily and hourly practised, with increasing perfection, at home; by the way of persevering prayer, incessantly knocking at the gates of Heaven. Burying her trouble in her heart, she maintained henceforth an absolute silence on this delicate subject.

"I will be silent," she said to herself. "I shall pray, and await the hour of grace. My only sermon will be to make myself better and to make him happy."

Francis Macary was happy. But happiness is a fugitive bird. Scarcely have we touched it when it suddenly flies away and is hidden in the branches above us. Such was, alas! the short-lived happiness of the cabinet-maker of Lavaur.

Macary had been married but a few months when a malady, the first symptoms of which had appeared during the last period of his travels, began to assume more alarming proportions. The veins in his limbs became very much swollen. It is well known what a painful affliction this is. The sufferer is unable to stand without experiencing great weakness and pain. Macary was now to know this practically.

Always hard on himself, he began to fight against his bodily infirmity. "My legs are lazy," he would say. "They want to get up late, go to bed early, and do nothing. If they were two servants, I would discharge them and employ others. But since I must keep them, I will try their temper so well that I shall force them in spite of themselves to do their duty."

And doing violence to himself every day, sawing and planing as usual, he obstinately refused to consult a physician. In this way, some years passed by, until an incident—the illness of his mother—brought Doctor Rossignol to his house.

"Well, Francis," said the latter, "you are

never tired. As often as I pass in the street I always see you at work."

"Never tired?" answered Macary. "Not exactly. In the morning I am hardly able to stand, and during the whole day my limbs are like lead, with sharp, darting pains as if you pierced me with your lancet. In the evening they are all inflamed."

"My friend, you work too much."

"That's the way the rich talk! A poor man never works enough. My little girl and my boy already eat like wolves."

"Have you not a large vein running down your thigh?"

"I have two enormous ones: one on each leg."

"Let me see. They are varicose veins," said the Doctor, after examining them. "They are indeed enormous, and threaten to assume altogether abnormal proportions. There are also large tumors with marked obstructions. You will have to take great precautions."

"What must I do?" asked Macary.

"You will have to compress your limbs with linen bandages and wear dog-skin

gaiters. At the same time you must rest, and lie down on feeling the least fatigue."

The window-panes rattled at the terrible oath uttered by Macary.

"I quit work and only twenty-six years old! You would make Francis Macary a fine father of a family. You—you mock me!" It was with difficulty he restrained himself from taking the Doctor by the shoulders and pitching him out of the house.

He continued to follow his own course, but the malady rapidly grew worse. Macary consulted another physician, one of the Benevolent Society of St. Louis, of which he was a member. Doctor Ségur spoke in the same way as Doctor Rossignol.

"If you do not follow my advice, you will soon be a helpless invalid. You will be an old man at forty."

Now, Macary had withal good common sense. The perfect agreement of the two physicians, and in addition his pains and sufferings, which were becoming intolerable, brought him to his senses. But it was not without storms of fury and dreadful imprecations that he consented to follow the

Doctor's prescriptions, and rested from time to time. His legs, from the big toe to the knee, were compressed in linen bandages, and he wore dog-skin gaiters, tightly laced.

In spite of these precautions, the disease progressed from year to year. About the age of thirty-five or forty, the two saphena veins were so greatly swollen as to project about the thickness of a finger. Large tumors formed: one as large as an egg. When the bandages were removed they appeared like enormous wens. Later they formed ulcers, and recourse was had to dressings with lint and cerate.

The unfortunate man was now unable to work more than a few hours every day. Often it happened that he was obliged to stop work for a month or longer, and keep to his bed, or rest in an invalid-chair covered with a mattress. As Doctor Ségur had predicted, old age came on prematurely, at least as far as his limbs were concerned, for the rest of the body was perfectly sound, and the mind, ever active, preserved the freshness of youth.

This sad state gradually became worse. Macary saw his children growing up around him, and was indignant at himself because he was not the first and last at work.

"I am not worth a quarter of an apprentice!" he would often exclaim, striking the bench an awful blow with the hammer.

Sometimes, beside himself with rage, and grinding his teeth, he would tear off his leather gaiters, bandages and dressings, and throw them all out of the window; as if, in ridding himself of the remedy, he could also drive away the disease. Then, in a few moments, he would groan and cry out. The veins and tumors, no longer compressed, would begin to bleed profusely, and pains, smarting like fire burning into the flesh, would seize upon his body. Then Macary, suffering and swearing like one of the damned, would call again for his cast-off bandages with the same fury with which he had thrown them away. "Here! here!" he would cry; "put that dog-skin on my dog's skin again."

The word *put on* is a soft expression for the real verb used. The dignity of historian

does not permit us to repeat in writing the words used, and which no dictionary has dared to give.

Sad as the present was, the future held out no hope of cure. The cabinet-maker had consulted other physicians, especially the famous Doctor Bernet. All declared the case incurable; on this point the medical faculty agreed. It remained only to bear his affliction with patience and resignation. But Macary knew not what patience was; and resignation was a flower that did not grow in his garden. This energetic and impetuous man, condemned to inactivity; this fiery and explosive nature, confined and held captive within four walls, vented itself in imprecations. He grumbled, stormed and raged from morning until night. His room resounded with thunder.

This storm of pain and rage lasted ten, twenty, thirty years. Macary, during these thirty years of suffering, vowed himself to the devil from morning till night. He never addressed Heaven except by his oaths; for him blasphemy took the form of prayer. *Non precabat, imprecabat.* The name of

God was never pronounced by him except in his terrible expressions of anger and rage.

III.

In that same house, however, the sacred name of God was pronounced in low tones of reverence. Macary's pious wife and his daughter Delphine prayed with all their heart. And He who hears the secret aspirations of the Christian soul was no doubt more attentive to those humble, noiseless supplications than to the frenzied outbursts of the enraged workman. They did not hope for the cure of an incurable evil, and did not petition for the impossible. They only asked of God to soften the bitterness of the trial, and to give peace to this troubled soul.

That nothing may be omitted, we must say that if Macary waged a kind of open warfare against Heaven, he lived in peace with his fellowmen. In his advanced age, in the evening of life, he still remained the frank, generous and obliging man that he had been in youth. He loved his wife and children. And, assuredly, if he had died at

that moment, the epitaph so frequently seen in our cemeteries, though so often deceitful, might with all truth be engraved upon his tombstone: "He was a good father and a good husband." His anger expended itself upon things, not on persons. He was gentle and affectionate toward the companion of his life. And when, amid his impatience and oaths, one of his children or grandchildren (for time had passed on, and he was now a grandfather) came near him, he became suddenly calm and began to smile. He was a good, charitable and cordial neighbor. The poor never knocked in vain at his door.

Macary had little; but that little he distributed with a generous heart. His compassion for the sufferings of others often made him forget his own; and if his own pain wrung cries from him, the affliction of his neighbor drew tears from his eyes. How many times, giving his labor, painful as it was, as an alms, did he not, with noble joy, make a bed, or a cupboard, or a table for some poor household in want of everything? Like the poor widow spoken of in the Gospel, and whom Our Lord praised,

he gave from his very substance; as though to yield to charity was more necessary than the necessities of life.

When a man without religion has these qualities,—to speak more justly, when he possesses these virtues toward his neighbor,—his apparent impiety toward God is, in reality, but a mistake. He blasphemes because he is in ignorance, because he does not understand, because he has false ideas. The evil which he then commits, however monstrous it may be formally and as it appears to our judgment, proceeds far less from perversity of will than from an error of mind and a partial obscuration of reason,—intellectual miseries upon which the Lord has pity, and which He takes into account in the exercise of His pardoning justice.

Through the muddy stream, the eye of God discerns the pure diamond. Thus it happens that the Father of all mercy is often pleased to choose His friends and servants from among these generous wanderers. While these blasphemers are uttering their imprecations, and the furious are giving vent to their fury, there comes the day of

grace marked out by His Providence. He calls them to Him suddenly, as He called St. Paul; and, in a voice that brings them to their knees, He says, "Why persecutest thou Me?" To the surprise of all, He gives the preference to these publicans amongst a thousand others, and accepts their hospitality: "Zaccheus, make haste and come down: for this day I must abide in thy house." More than that: He sometimes presents them as examples to men of strict dogma and literal practice. And if He wishes to point out to the latter a type and a model to follow, He takes, on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, some lost child, who, though wrong in head, is right at heart, and He relates to His disciples the sublime history of the Good Samaritan.

Let us never forget that it is not without reason that Our Lord wishes to be called "The Good God." Among His infinite and numberless perfections goodness is, in a sense, supreme; and, before all else, goodness constitutes the true character of His children. "Be merciful," He says, "as your Heavenly Father is merciful." "Blessed are the mer-

ciful; for they shall obtain mercy." And therefore the good, though they may appear to be out of the fold, belong to the flock. In a blessed moment the Heavenly Pastor comes in search of the stray sheep that bear His mark; He seeks for the lost coin which bears His image and inscription: *Deus charitas est.*

God will perform a miracle rather than that such souls and such hearts should be lost. With a word, from the depths of the Invisible penetrating the heart, He will say to another Augustine: "*Tolle, lege*,—Take and read"; and He will place before his eyes the apostolic page which is to enlighten and convert him.

IV.

The blasphemer Macary was for more than thirty years in the condition we have described. As already stated, though at certain times he was able to stand and walk a little, and work for a few hours, there were other and longer periods when he was obliged to lie stretched at full length.

This happened especially when the varicose ulcers suppurated more than usual.

These interruptions would soon have ruined the little business of Macary, had he not provided for the contingency by training his son Charles in his own trade of cabinet-making. The latter, who had become as skilful as his father, was married, and lived in a neighboring house, but came each morning to the old workshop.

About the middle of July, 1871, the intensity of the malady and the fearful condition of the ulcers had condemned Macary to a state of complete inaction, and for six weeks he lay extended on his invalid-chair. His physical and mental sufferings were extreme. His body was racked with pain, and his soul a prey to the greatest weariness.

As a means of distraction, he wished to read, and called for a book which he was told contained some extraordinary tales. He called for it just as he would ask for "The Arabian Nights," or any other story-book. But Providence was to make his reading serve to accomplish His own designs.

When God, only yesterday, — fifteen centu-

ries have passed since, but for Him they are as one day,—willed to conquer the son of Monica, He placed in the hands of that philosopher, that thinker, that prince of intelligence and knowledge, the Divine Book itself,—the words written by the Apostle St. Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost. But for the cabinet-maker Macary, the illiterate Samaritan, the poor publican, the humble workman, whose hands were hardened by the saw and the plane, it was not necessary to employ such profundity of thought and sublimity of expression. There was no need either of the epistle of a saint or the inspired text.

The volume which Macary called for was a work of his own times, a history of apparitions and miracles, and had been written by a layman, a man of the world,—himself a publican!

This book, entitled “Our Lady of Lourdes,” was received by the invalid late one evening. On the next day he took it up carelessly and began to peruse its pages, interrupting his reading from time to time, in order to give orders about some piece of work, or to

inquire if some entries had been made,—in a word, informing himself about the details of the business of the shop. But, little by little, his attention was arrested, and his tongue became silent. He appeared, so to speak, to see and hear nothing of what was going on around him. Just as a traveller on leaving a dusty road, where he has been exposed to the burning rays of a summer sun, and entering a thick forest, finds himself yielding to the influence of the refreshing shade and profound silence; and, walking under the arching branches of ancient trees and in solitary parks, sees himself separated from the rest of mankind, and, as it were, lost in the grand and majestic bosom of Nature,—so too, did Macary, as he progressed in his reading, feel himself influenced by some unknown emotion which penetrated his soul and entirely absorbed him. He beheld himself freed from all thought of things of earth, and, as it were, mysteriously surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere and the presence of God the Lord.

Tears poured down the rough face of the workman,

“What! You are crying!” exclaimed his wife, in astonishment. “What is there so affecting in that book?”

“My dear Virginie, I can not explain it. Leave me! leave me!”

“Read a few pages, at least, that I may know what it is about.”

“No, no! It is impossible. Tears choke me. After a while we will read it together. But for the present I must read it alone.”

To Francis Macary it seemed as though he had awakened from a long dream and the darkness of night were suddenly dissipated. A new, unexpected light broke upon his dazzled vision. His country—the true country of souls—from which he had so long wandered, lay extended before him, with its fountains of living water, its refreshing peace and its heavenly horizon. The aged Macary was born again to the faith of his childhood.

What had acted so powerfully upon him? Was it the book itself? Certainly not. No more than in Baptism the common water of earthly fountains—no more than the trumpets of the Jews, when at their sound the walls of Jericho crumbled. It was solely

the blessing of God, who made use of a means in itself of no value. To Him who created the world out of nothing, all things are instruments for good.

As Macary read the chapters in which the author recounts the wonderful effects of the supernatural Spring, which the Blessed Virgin caused to burst forth at the Grotto of Lourdes, he experienced a violent trembling.

“And I, too,” he said to himself: “If I could procure some of that water, I should be cured.”

Faith was not alone in entering his soul; it was accompanied by hope.

The book had been opened at early dawn; it was finished with the last rays of the setting sun.

V.

That day, which was to be an epoch in Francis Macary's life, was Sunday, July 16, 1871, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and the thirteenth anniversary of the final apparition of the Blessed Virgin to Bernadette Soubirous.

"From that moment," he afterward wrote to a friend, "the hand of God was upon me and began to guide me. And it was indeed necessary. For at that moment, though nailed to my chair by my varicose limbs, and unable to stand without experiencing the most terrible sufferings, I took it into my head to go out and take the few steps which were to lead me on that blessed road."

It was then about eight o'clock in the evening: the heat was very oppressive.

"I can not stay any longer on this chair," said Macary. "I must take the fresh air; let us go out for a while."

"Where do you want to go, my poor husband?" asked his wife. "You are not able to walk."

"So much the worse for my legs. It's all the same to me. These limbs can complain if they want to. I have nursed them long enough; they should support me, too, for a while."

"Come, come! Be reasonable!"

"I want to leave this room and breathe a while outside. Give me your arm."

He was already on his feet, and, willing or

unwilling, it was necessary to humor his passing fancies.

Leaning with one hand upon his wife Virginie, the faithful support of his old age and sickness, and with the other upon a heavy, gnarled cane, he dragged himself along the street which led to St. Alain's, the Cathedral of Lavaur. He suffered excruciating pain; it was only his indomitable will that kept him erect and enabled him to walk under such suffering.

In this way, he reached the house of his sister, Madame Bonafous, who saw him from the window, and called out to him: "Where in the world are you going, Francis?"

"I would go and throw myself under the bridge, for half a sou. My limbs are pierced with red-hot irons."

"Come in for a while and take a little rest."

"Rest? My poor Marie, I do not know what it is!"

His sister's room was on the ground-floor. He opened a door and fell into a seat, completely exhausted. They talked together for

a while; I do not know on what subject, and it matters little. Night came on, and they could no longer distinguish each other's face.

A priest was passing along the street. It was M. l'Abbé Coux, the curate of the Cathedral. When in front of the open window, he recognized the clear, short tones of the cabinet-maker's voice.

"Macary! Is that you?" he cried from the street. "Why, you are getting better!"

"On the contrary, I am getting worse, Monsieur l'Abbé. I would like to sell you the skin of my legs. But I tell you beforehand that it is not worth much. It is full of varicose veins, ulcers, lumps and knots. Before, behind, right, left; on the ankles, on the calves,—from the foot to the knee, it is as full of holes as an old stocking."

The Abbé Coux entered the house. He exhorted Macary to patience and resignation; and, after exchanging a few words, he arose to take his leave. "I must go," he said, "and finish some preparations for my journey. To-morrow I leave for Our Lady of Lourdes, and I will gladly undertake any commissions you may have."

At the words "Our Lady of Lourdes" Macary raised his head quickly.

"Certainly I have a commission. If your Blessed Virgin has compassion on the unfortunate, she may well take pity on me. Tell her that there is a poor devil here at Lavaur whose limbs are full of holes, and that she should not leave a man in that condition when she can take him out of it. Tell her that I am at the height of suffering, and can stand it no longer. Let her cure me or kill me."

"You may be assured," replied the Abbé, smiling, "that I shall not ask her to kill you. Indeed, she would not listen to such a petition."

The thought of the book which he had read, and the miraculous cures it narrated came before the mind of Macary, and he felt a vague yet strong hope rising within him. "Monsieur l'Abbé," he said, gravely, "do me this service. Bring me some of the blessed water, and pray for me."

"I promise you to do so."

VI.

On the following Wednesday, the 19th of July, about nine o'clock in the evening, Francis Macary was visited by his sister, Madame Bonafous, at whose house he had met the Abbé Coux. She brought with her a little vial, holding about the third of a pint of the water of Lourdes.

"That is for me!" exclaimed Macary, radiant with hope. "Now I shall soon be cured. *Au revoir*, my dear sister."

Crippled in both limbs, dragging his feet painfully, supporting himself by the wall, the furniture, or leaning upon his wife's arm, the workman left his chair and betook himself to his room. He placed on the bureau the vial of the water of Lourdes, and fell on his knees before a crucifix, which on the day of their marriage his pious wife had hung upon the wall.

"I then said a short prayer to the good Virgin," he told us. "It was the only prayer, I believe, I ever knew, and I said it with my whole soul."

It was the "Hail Mary," the remembrance

of which had alone escaped the religious shipwrecks of his memory.

Then he proceeded to remove his dressings—the bandages and the dog-skin gaiters,—and pouring the blessed water in the hollow of his right hand he gently bathed his limbs, the varicose veins, the enormous excrescences, and the suppurating wounds. He prayed with his whole heart; not, as before, by the aid of a studied formula, but with that interior and profound elevation of the soul, at the same time mute and eloquent, which is the highest form of prayer,—the prayer in spirit and in truth of which the Lord Jesus has spoken and which penetrates at once to the throne of an all-powerful and all-merciful God.

There still remained a few drops of the water. “Swallow that, my boy!” said Macary to himself. And putting the vial to his lips he drained it at one draught.

On his bed lay the linen bandages and dog-skin gaiters, which had encircled his diseased limbs. It was Macary’s custom, when in bed, to roll up carefully these bandages, each of them five or six yards long, so as to put

them on easily in the morning. On this evening he acted differently. His blunt faith assumed blunt expressions. Gathering up everything, he made a bundle, which he threw violently into a corner, saying:

“Good-night to you, bandages and gaiters! I bid you good-bye, dog-skin and corset-laces! Since the Blessed Virgin has cured so many others, she will certainly cure me too. You will never again be around my limbs as long as I live.”

Good Christian though she was, the wife of Macary did not share his unshaken confidence. When she saw this mingling of prayer and liveliness, she could not forbear smiling sadly; and, shaking her head, she said to herself: “Alas! alas! my poor, dear husband! You will need your bandages and dog-skin again to-morrow. And then we shall hear the curses resound.”

Faith in the power of God, and in the reality of miracles in general, does not necessarily imply faith in any particular miracle which the hope of another may proclaim as indubitable. Nature is slow to believe that which surpasses its powers, and to it the

miraculous seems impossible. Thus, in biblical times, the aged Sara, wife of Abraham, laughed when the angel announced her approaching maternity: so too, on Wednesday, July 19, 1871, the wife of the cabinet-maker of Lavaur smiled when she heard her husband announce with bold assurance his own immediate and certain cure.

Hitherto Macary had always been slow to find rest at night. The blood, coursing rapidly through the veins of the limbs when relieved from the pressure of the bandage, would cause, through the whole system, a kind of fever and sleeplessness. But on this evening, the cabinet-maker had hardly stretched himself in bed when he fell into a deep sleep. His wife, somewhat surprised, retired on tip-toe to her own room.

An open door communicated between the two rooms. All the lights were extinguished, and silence reigned throughout the house.

VII.

At midnight Macary suddenly awoke. Contrary to his usual experience, he felt

no pain in his limbs. He passed his hands over them; there were no lumps!

"Wife!" he cried, "I am cured!"

"You are dreaming, my poor Francis," replied his wife from the adjoining room.

"You are dreaming. Go to sleep."

"I am not dreaming," said Macary. "I have felt my limbs."

But sleep, which had been interrupted for a moment, again weighed upon him; and, in spite of his happy surprise, his head fell back upon the pillow, and once more he fell into a deep slumber.

At five o'clock he opened his eyes. The rays of the morning sun lit up the room. Macary could not only touch his limbs, but also see them. All signs of the malady had disappeared; no lumps, no varicose veins, no ulcers! The veins had resumed their normal proportions! To the sight as well as to the touch the skin was whole and smooth!

Ah! if up to this time the feelings of Macary had always found expression in terrible oaths, it may be said now that the cry which he uttered denoted a complete transformation in his nature. The poor

man joined his hands, and raising them to Heaven he exclaimed: "O my God! O most holy Virgin of Lourdes!" And at the same time that he turned his heart to Heaven, he thought also of the aged companion of his life, and in indescribable tones of emotion he cried: "Virginie! Virginie!"

She thought he called for help, and, frightened, she hastened to his assistance. With a gesture, her husband, his face bathed in tears, pointed to his healed limbs.

"Well," he said, "you would not believe me last night. Look, now!"

She was seized with trembling at the wonderful sight; she knelt by the side of the bed, and, burying her head in her hands, broke into deep sobs.

Macary arose and stood erect. He walked without gaiters and bandages, and felt no pain or fatigue. He knelt and prayed for a while; then he ran to his workshop. He took up and carried without effort a heavy plank, and placing it across his bench began to plane. The blood circulated more vigorously through his veins. It seemed as though he had renewed his youth,

His son Charles now came as usual to his daily work; when he entered the shop he uttered a cry of surprise.

“What, father! Are you on your feet and at work? What has happened?”

“What has happened, my son, is that the water of Lourdes has produced its effect. Come here.”

And rolling up to his knees his wide linen pantaloons, he showed his limbs. Like his mother a few moments before, the son could find no words. He clasped his father in his arms and wept in silence.

VIII.

During the morning, Macary, looking through the window, saw the figure of a priest advancing rapidly in the direction of the Cathedral. It was the Abbé Coux. The happy cabinet-maker hurried out; but the priest had already passed the house, and was some fifteen or twenty paces ahead.

“Good morning, Monsieur l’Abbé!” Macary shouted after him. “The Blessed Virgin has heard you, and me too. I am cured. Come and see.”

“Very well! very well!” replied the Abbé Coux, who either did not understand the workman, or, perhaps, feared some of his wicked jokes. He did not for a moment think that the cure of an incurable malady, which had endured for more than thirty years, could be effected so suddenly in one evening. “Very well!” he said; “I am in a hurry.” And he continued on his way.

Later in the day the priest passed again before the workshop, and Macary ran out to meet him.

“Monsieur l’Abbé, I called out to you this morning that I was cured. But I understood well that you did not believe me. It is true, nevertheless; and you can prove it with your own eyes. The Blessed Virgin has cured me.”

Macary’s tone of voice excluded all idea of raillery or falsehood. The priest experienced a feeling of terror:—the supernatural had passed by his side and he had failed to recognize it.

“Is it possible!” he exclaimed, growing pale.

They entered the nearest house, which

happened to be that of Macary's sister, where three days before the old workman had charged the Abbé Coux to pray for him at the rocks of Massabielle, and to bring him some water of Lourdes.

On hearing the words of Macary and the priest, a crowd formed in the street. Several entered with them into the house of Madame Bonafous. Macary showed his cured limbs to all. The varicose veins were now in their normal condition, the lumps had disappeared, and the wounds were all healed.

"And now, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the workman, "now that the Blessed Virgin has cured my body, the soul must also be cured, and you will be my physician."

The Divine Hand which had removed the physical evil had also touched the heart, and Francis Macary was a new man. The unbeliever, the blasphemer, the man of terrible oaths, on the following Sunday arose from the midst of the faithful and with his family approached the Holy Table to receive that God whom he had so long blasphemed. His eyes were filled with tears, and joy was manifested on the faces of all present.

If there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that is converted than a hundred just who need not penance, this joy of our heavenly Father is also felt in the hearts of His children upon earth. It was a happy day for the people of the Cathedral of St. Alain.

IX.

The report of this great event soon spread through the city of Lavaur and the surrounding country, and everywhere produced a great sensation.

Macary went to visit his three physicians. Nothing could equal their surprise on seeing him cured. The malady, they considered, was certainly incurable; it dated back some thirty years; no medical treatise had related a case like it:—and yet Macary was there before their eyes with neither ulcers nor varicose veins. A power unknown to science, and superior to nature, had removed all. Those numerous and enormous varicose bundles, those monstrous knots which had so deformed his two limbs, had all disappeared, and nothing remained except one

very small knot on the right limb. And this slight trace of his former condition remained to bear witness to a malady that had passed away, just as the dry bed of a torrent testifies to all eyes the former passage of the waters.

“Decidedly,” cried Doctor Ségur, after a most careful examination, “I can perceive but a slight trace of those enormous varicose veins.”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Doctor Rossignol, in his turn: “*the accidents have suddenly disappeared*, and of the enormous knots there remains but this very little one.”

“And *there exists not the slightest appearance of engorgement*,” said Doctor Bernet, in astonishment. “What is particularly striking is that the bundles of varicose veins *have entirely disappeared*, and in their place the touch reveals little hard cords, empty of blood and rolling under the fingers. . . . Now, we know that Macary was attacked by a chronic malady. *All doctors agree on this point, that varicoses if left to themselves are incurable; that they are rarely cured by palliative means, and still less do they*

disappear spontaneously. . . . And yet here is a radical cure effected in the space of one night, and solely by the application of the water of Lourdes!"

"This case of spontaneous cure appears still more surprising to me," declared Doctor Ségur, "from the fact *that the annals of science record no case of like nature*."

"It must be confessed," said Doctor Bernet, finally, "*that no author mentions a case similar or analogous to this, and science is incapable of explaining such a cure*. And even though some details of the fact affirmed by Macary were not proved by authentic testimonies apart from his own, it would still be a most extraordinary—nay, a supernatural fact."

Such was the textual verdict pronounced by these three eminent physicians, one after another, in the name of human science. We have copied these positive and formal expressions word for word from their *written* declarations. At the end of the volume (Appendix) we reproduce *in extenso* the certificates of these three distinguished members of the medical Faculty, with their

signatures entered before the Mayor and the Sub-Prefect.

If the adversaries of the supernatural demand authentic proofs and certificates from men of science, they have them at hand.

X.

Two months afterward, on the 18th of September, Macary carried to the Grotto of Lourdes as an *ex-voto* his bandage apparatus, mute witnesses of a former malady divinely cured. They may still be seen there to remind the visitor of one of God's miracles.

At Lourdes, under the shadow of those Rocks of Massabielle sanctified by the presence of her who had so miraculously succored and saved him, the emotion of Macary was very great. He thus expressed himself in a letter which is before us as we write:

“I fell on my knees, and for ten minutes at least my heart was so moved that, though I wished to pray, I could not utter a word. Finally, a torrent of tears came to my relief, and I found words to address an act of

thanksgiving to that tender Mother whom I seemed to see before me. Sir, I shall never forget that moment. . . . Ah! if our free-thinkers could but taste a little of the happiness which one experiences at such moments, they would very soon recognize the difference between our faith and their doctrines."

From such words we may divine that the moral change in the man was not less wonderful than the physical. From that day his life passed between work, since he had recovered his strength, and prayer, since he had again found faith. Just as Saul the persecutor was converted on the way to Damascus, so the blasphemer Macary had been changed by the grace of God. No doubt his joy at being freed from his infirmity was very great; but we, after having seen and heard him, can testify that it was nothing compared to his happiness at again becoming a Christian.

The Gospel speaks of the joy of the Good Shepherd on finding the lost sheep; but it tells us nothing of the intoxicating delight of the sheep itself so sweetly brought back

to the fold; nor of the prodigal child embraced by his father; nor of the sinner reconciled with his God. This delight, this filial joy, this interior and inexpressible happiness, Francis Macary tasted in all its plenitude. His soul was henceforth that of an apostle. He would have wished to convert the whole world, and to bring all the members of the great human family to the knowledge and love of the Sovereign Truth.

XI.

After his cure, Macary never ceased returning thanks to God and giving testimony before men of the heavenly favor of which he had been the object. Every evening, after the work of the day, he would visit the church, there to pass an hour before the Blessed Sacrament. He related his history to everyone that came to see him. To all who wrote to him he responded scrupulously, giving a clear, exact and vivid narration of this great event of his life.

If he chanced to read in any of the newspapers an attack upon miracles, this brave

workman would leave his plane and take up the pen to write to the editor a circumstantial relation of what had happened to himself. Several of the letters thus written have been sent to us, and we have drawn largely from them, trying to infuse into our own story the spirit of his frank and manly words. One of them concludes thus:

“.... From that moment I have worn stockings like other people. I have not seen the slightest inflammation, not felt the least pain; and yet I work every day from five o'clock in the morning to seven at night.

“This is an exact account of the wonder which Our Lady of Lourdes has deigned to work in me, and I give it to you under oath, praying you to publish it, to make it known everywhere as you may think fit. Happy shall I be if I learn from you that my letter has been the means of leading back one infidel into the true path. As for me, who never prayed before, I assure you that I am striving to redeem the time lost; and I shall never cease thanking the good God and the Blessed Virgin for having chosen me as an instrument for the manifestation of their

glory and goodness. Adieu. Be so good as to remember me in your prayers, and believe me

“Your brother in Jesus Christ,

“FRANCIS MACARY.”

XII.

The following year, on the 24th of June, a procession of about a thousand Christians,—men and women, priests and laics,—singing canticles, followed the road which led to the Grotto of Lourdes. These pilgrims remembered that the Blessed Virgin Mary, on being invoked, had twice delivered their city: the first time from a plague during the fourteenth century, and the second time from the invasion of enemies two centuries later; and a magnificent armorial banner at the head of the procession recalled by two dates this tradition of their ancestors. But between the two dates of the past was one entirely modern:

JULY 19, 1871.

It was the date of the supernatural cure

which we have related. On the other side of the banner was inscribed:

TO MARY IMMACULATE.

THE GRATEFUL CITY OF LAVAU.

The man who carried this emblem of the gratitude of a whole people was Francis Macary. Every year afterward he made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to Lourdes.

XIII.

In the beginning of October, 1875, Macary paid his customary annual visit to the sanctuary of his benefactress. We happened to be in Lourdes at the same time, and he came to visit us. We shall never forget his frank, open countenance.

"Ah! Monsieur," he said to us, "I have long desired to know you. It is through your book that I was led to obtain my two cures."

What he called his second cure was that of his soul.

With these words the good man opened his arms and gave us the embrace customary

among the faithful in the early ages of the Church.

While conversing with him, and carefully examining his limbs, at one time diseased, we remarked the peculiar character of his physical condition. Since his miraculous cure, which had taken place four years previously, Macary had been free not only from relapse, but from any other indisposition. It seemed as if the Divine Hand was, henceforth to preserve this man, who had suffered so long, from the slightest change in perfect health. Spare, active, erect and strong, his appearance gave the idea that he was invulnerable. Though subject to the law of death, he appeared removed from the accidents of sickness. He was like a soldier clothed in a coat of mail, upon whose breast every dart falls harmless, without leaving any impression. A violent shock may overthrow him, but no thrust can pierce him.

We invited Francis Macary to sit at our table and partake of our repast; and it was during the meal that he related to us his history, with wonderful animation and enthusiasm, and an emotion which communi-

cated itself to us. The Curé Peyramale; the Abbé Pomian, cetequist of Bernadette; the Abbé Peyret, curate of Lourdes, and now curé of Aubaride; M. and Madame Ernest Hello, were with us, and all were charmed by this Christian, picturesque and graphic recital.

In a corner of the dining-room my secretary was seated at a writing-desk.

“What is that young man doing there?” asked Macary, toward the end of dinner.

“He is a stenographer. He writes as fast as a person speaks. He has taken down on paper every word that you have said.”

“Oh—well! I have nothing to take back. From beginning to end, you have heard nothing but the truth.”

He accepted our hospitality and passed a few days with us. When he was leaving, I went with him to the station and promised to visit him at Lavour during the following month, on my way to Paris. I desired to interrogate still further—to penetrate more deeply into the heart of this history, and the history of this heart.

Alas! man proposes and God disposes!

XIV.

Two weeks afterward (October 21, 1875), the city of Lavaur was in mourning. An immense crowd accompanied to the tomb the remains of the most loved and venerated workman in that part of the country. Francis Macary had been carried off suddenly. No suffering, no sickness, no weariness had preceded his sudden death. The subject of the Blessed Virgin's favor had not been ill: he had suddenly ceased to live on earth, in order to enter into life on high. He died cured.

A friendly pen writes as follows: "Thus Lazarus was raised to life, and then he died. So too have died, after a few years passed upon earth, all those personages of whom the Gospel records the supernatural cures by the hand of Jesus our Saviour. But the health and the life to which they had been restored manifested before the world the power of the Lord. Once this work was accomplished, God permitted them to die like other men, and enter the place of recompense." *

* E. Artus.

Therefore it is, good and pious Macary, that I can not see you again here below, and keep my promise to visit you. Pray to God that our meeting may be only deferred, and that one day, with those whom I love, we may be united together in the brilliant light of the throne of God, at the feet of her whose history I, though unworthy, have had the joy to write, and whose powerful hand, to use your own words, twice cured you.*

LAUS DEO.

* The miraculous event, the details of which we have related, has furnished the subject of one of the stained-glass windows of the Basilica of Lourdes,—that of the Rosary Chapel, the seventh to the right on entering. Francis Macary is represented at the moment when he affirms his cure by the water of Lourdes. On a table by his side is the book which gave him faith. On the upper portion of the window, Our Lady of Lourdes is sending forth upon the workman the rays of grace. Called by the cries of happiness which she hears, the wife of the cabinet-maker of Lavaur has her hands clasped in thanksgiving to God.

APPENDIX.

We, the undersigned, Charles Macary (cabinet-maker), son of Francis Macary; Marie Bonafous (*née* Macary), his sister; P. Bonafous (priest and professor at the Petit Seminaire), his nephew;—having read the history entitled “The Cabinet-Maker of Lavaur,” do hereby attest its entire exactness. The facts therein related are absolutely such as Francis Macary related; such as we members of his family have witnessed; such as they are known in the city of Lavaur.

C. MACARY,
P. BONAFOUS,
MARIE BONAFOUS.

LAVAUUR, June 7, 1882.

I, the undersigned, Archpriest of Lavaur, add my own testimony to that of the Macary family, in favor of the authenticity of the narrative of Henri Lasserre.

ROQUES,
Archpriest of Lavaur.

LAVAUUR, June 16, 1882.

LAGRAVE, Jan. 25, 1883.

M. HENRI LASSERRE:

HONORED SIR:—I most willingly comply with your request to give my testimony regarding the history you have written. Your work is, *in every particular, a truthful narration of a fact* which will be one of the sweetest memories of my priestly life. . . . Allow me to tell you how true to life has been your sketch of Francis Macary. . . . I am convinced that the few pages you have devoted to him will be of great benefit to all who may have the happiness to read them. . . .

Accept, my dear sir, my most profound respects.

J. Coux.

Curé de Lagrave (Diocèse d'Albi.)

I, the undersigned, testify that *for about thirty years*, Francis Macary, cabinet-maker, was troubled with varicose veins. *The varices, which were the thickness of a finger and unusually knotted and winding*, required, up to the present, regular compression by bandages and by dog-skin gaiters,

In spite of these precautions, ulcerations appeared frequently in both legs, necessitating invariably absolute rest and prolonged treatment. I visited him to-day, and, with the lower members free from bandages, etc., I could perceive but very slight traces of the enormous varices.

This case of *spontaneous cure* appears to me the more extraordinary, because the *annals of science mention no fact of a like nature*.

SÉGUR, M. D.

LAVAUUR, Aug. 16, 1871.

I, the undersigned, testify that for about thirty years, Francis Macary, cabinet-maker at Lavaur, was attacked by varices with enormous nodosities, complicated frequently with ulcerous formations, despite the constant compression of gaiters and proper bandages; that *these have suddenly disappeared*, and to-day there remains but a slight node in the upper and internal part of the right leg.

ROSSIGNOL, M. D.

LAVAUUR, Aug. 25, 1871.

Francis Macary, sixty years of age, cabinet-maker at Lavaur, member of the Society of St. Louis, consulted us, about twenty years ago, in regard to varicose veins, which affected the popliteal space, the internal portion of the knee, and the calf of the left leg. In the lower part of the limb, there was a varicose ulcer hard to the touch, unusually enlarged, and its tissues very painful. Besides these there were two old scars, which had nothing to do with the present malady—being the effects of a severe burn received some twenty years before. In the present case, the dilated veins were so many and the enlargement so great, that, so far as we could judge, surgical remedies were literally and formally contradictory.

Macary appeared to us as one doomed to a perpetual infirmity—and all that we could do was to prescribe palliative remedies, as our medical brethren had done before us.

Eighteen years later, that is to say two years ago, Macary came again to consult us. The condition of his leg was much worse. We repeated our first declaration, and insisted that the patient should, as the only

remedy, submit to absolute rest and to the application of bandages. To-day, Aug. 15, 1871, Macary came a third time. The ulcer is perfectly healed—no appliances compress the limb—and withal *there exists not the slightest trace of an enlargement*. What strikes us particularly is that these varicose nodes have entirely disappeared, palpation presents in the stead minute cords, hard, bloodless and rolling under the fingers. The internal saphena vein *has its normal size and direction*. The most attentive examination can not discover any trace of a surgical operation.

According to the story of Macary, this radical cure was effected in one night, and solely by the application of compresses of water from the Grotto of Lourdes. In conclusion, we say that *science can not explain this fact: for no author cites a fact similar or analogous thereto*. All are agreed upon these points, that *varices if left to themselves are incurable; that they are not cured except by palliative means, and still less do they heal spontaneously; that they constantly become worse; in fine, that no radical cure*

can be hoped for except by surgical operations which are not without grave danger to the patient. And so, were the fact affirmed by Macary not supported by authentic testimony other than his own, it would still be, at least for us, *the most extraordinary of facts, nay, a supernatural fact.*

Signed,

BERNET,

Doctor of the Faculty of Paris.

LAVAUUR, Aug. 15, 1871.

Witnessed for the legalization of the above signatures:

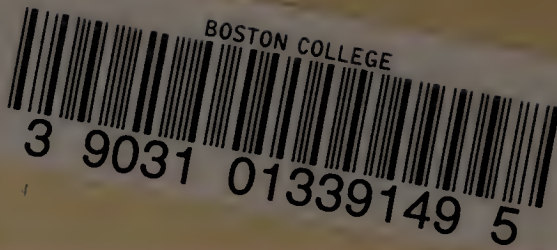
ET. DE VOISIN, Mayor.

LAVAUUR, Sept. 3, 1871.

Countersigned:

CELLIÈRES, Sub-Prefect.

LAVAUUR, Sept. 4, 1871.



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